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Fox River Valley
and
Other Verse

John Park Brown



The Author

Fox River Valley and Other Verse

By
John Park Brown



Brethren Publishing House
Elgin, Illinois
1919

PS3503
R8195F1
1919

To My Family

To our children, the source of many joys, and few sorrows, the incentive of my most unselfish efforts; in whom for twenty years I was ably sustained by their faithful and affectionate mother, this booklet is respectfully dedicated.

The Author.



SEP 22 1919

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Preface

The first appearance in print of anything from my pen, in rhythmic form, was "Fox River Valley," several years after I had written it. It was presented at the earnest solicitation of my family and a few friends. My diminished family now mostly scattered in other places than the city of their childhood, and thus, having more leisure to myself, I had time to look over the efforts of former years. These were mostly forgotten; some even lost. Other writings recently have been added. Several are the outcome of reflections as I passed through the furnace of affliction. I acceded to the demands of my family, that all of these productions may be preserved in convenient form.

For years I have dreaded to be classed as a rhymester, and have had no ambitions as a poet. My writings are almost wholly spontaneous. The Christian faith has dominated my life for years, which accounts for those articles or poems of spiritual import. A few humorous ones have been included, as I believe that mirth has beneficial qualities. Should some detect a note of sarcasm, I would refer them to 1 Kings 18: 27; Matt. 23: 14, and Acts 4: 20.

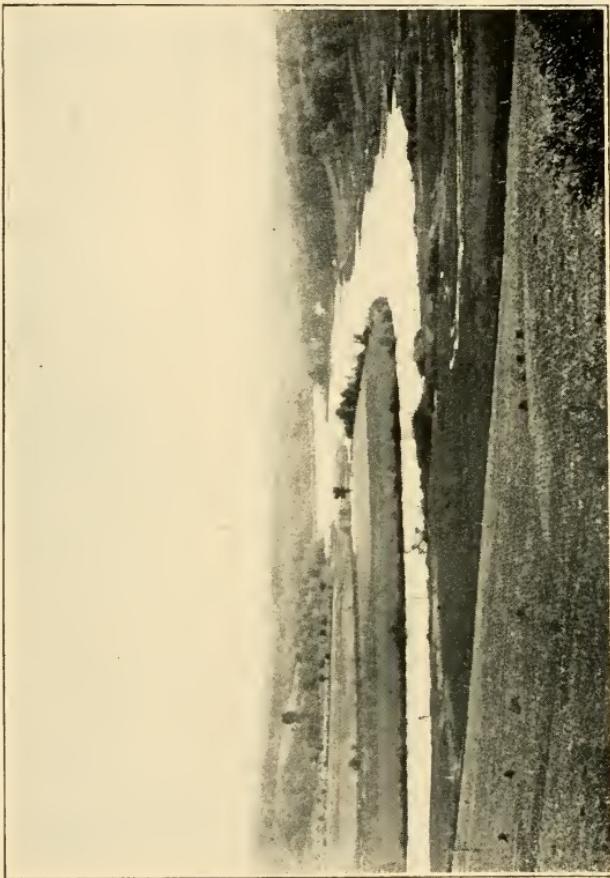
There is an appendix to these verses, not the least of the author's efforts, entitled "The Cogie: An Episode in the Author's Life," and "Puir Sandy" which are in Scottish dialect; also, "The Maiden's Prayer." In consonance with latter day methods, the appendix has been removed and is in his possession, preserved as a relic. A duplicate may be had by those desiring one, to complete the cycle, by communicating with him.

John Park Brown,
Elgin, Ill.

“A chiel's amang ye takin' notes,
And, faith, he'll print it.”

“A puir thing, bit ma very ain.”

Cities and Places



Fox River Valley, Above Algonquin, Illinois

Fox River Valley

Ah! fair Illinois, with your far-reaching prairies,
Your rivers, and valleys, and woodlands so dear.
No country I envy its myths, or its fairies;
While life is my portion, I fain would stay here.

Yes, here in the Fox river valley I'd linger
With heart tuned afresh to the best I have known.
Such beauties of color, suggesting—the finger
Of God hath been painting; such works are his own.

The verdure-clad banks sloping down to the river,
With bays and indentures the waters to greet,
My heart prompts, with nature, to praising the Giver
Of beauties so vernal, so pure and so sweet.

For ages the echoing woodlands resounding
The war whoop of red men, whose toil was the fray,
Now children of nations, with commerce astounding,
Have peopled the region, as if in a day.

The Switzer may boast of his mountains majestic,
And Italy vaunt of her cloudless blue sky;
But leave this dear valley; I'd surely get homesick;
For scenes so endearing I often would sigh.

Elgin, Illinois

City of Elgin, Illinois,
Cleft by the river Fox,
Your sightly dam doth power employ,
Yet cannot boast of locks,*
Dame Nature smiled upon your site,
With bluffs of woodsy charms;
Your parks the citizen's delight,
As well's surrounding farms.
We need not sing your praises fair
Through mountain peak sublime;
A measuring rod with hoary hair
Gives far-flung fame, through time.
† Clepsydra surely'd lose the race
As time is measured here;
So tortoise-like its ancient pace,
This rapid age and year.
Quite oft they say, who come to stay
“ I'm glad that here is home;
The atmosphere, so friendly here,
Not all have found, who roam.”

* Elgin's disgrace.

† Clepsydra, a female figure with bowed head, whose falling tears filled the buckets of a small water-wheel which measured the passing of time by its revolutions, long before the Christian Era.

Illinois As I Saw It in 1885

How lovely the straths in my own native land,
An' bonnie the burnies that rin tae the sea;
Yet blythe is ma hame on this aince foreign strand—
May fair Illinois be ma hame till a' dee.

Chicago

Great are thine urban ways,
City by inland sea;
Commerce in great relays,
Mighty thy destiny.
Fire did but purify;
Phoenix on ashes nest;
Buildings that cleave the sky,
Motto, "I will":—the best.

Scotland

Scotland, with rock-ribbed shore,
Swept by the wind and sea,
Many thy sons of yore
Have wandered far from thee;
Deep is thine impress felt
Where'er thy natives go;
Knit in the rugged Celt
Traits that e'er will show.

Washington, D. C.

"Distances great and magnificent,"
Said of a city new-born.
Baalim-like* words, so significant,
True still, though uttered in scorn.

Strong your young manhood, and virile;
Capitols hoary with age
Seeking o'er carnage and death pile,
Your signet on history's page.

Envious record for saving
Weaker ones, reft of their right;
Long may thy banner keep waving,
Great in its God-given might.

* Numbers 23: 11.

Edinburgh Castle and Rock, Scotland*

Perched as an eagle on thy lofty rocks,
Great scenes enacted 'neath thy silent gaze;
Ages ere Scotland produced the mighty Knox,
Thundering unflinching in Queen Mary's days.

Born on your height, her son whom fate's decree
Destined to reign as Britain's chosen king,
Countries long cleft would soon united be,
World homage owning to kings from him to spring.

Large is your page in history's misty lore,
Men from thy shadow; now world-wide their fame;
Legions beheld thee, who now are seen no more,
Sit there exalted, and honoured be thy name.

* Edinburgh Castle, nearly 400 feet above the ground level in the heart of the city.

The James River Valley, Va., and Legend of Maidens

Roll on, thou river James, 'twixt lovely hills,
In ceaseless flow unto the mighty sea;
While changeful scenes, thy bank and water thrills
My vision to behold in pageantry.

In stealth the lovers meet, their vows to seal
In holy bond, with dreaded Indian near,
Whose whoop, the maiden's blood might well congeal
Tho' he, now hers for life, said "Do not fear."

"Speed to the boat, but hover near," said he,
While men with ready arms must win or die;
By moon's pale beam her wounded swain did see
When to his rescue, swift her skiff did hie.

Well may a native child thy beauties tell,
Combined with legend old, yet strangely true;
While now the claims of commerce' golden spell
The present annals write, in letters new.

Virginia's Needs, 1919

More men and good roads are Virginia's needs;
How can we compute them with gold?
Without, she'll ne'er rise to her zenith of deeds,
But shadow her glory of old.

The race of today is a strenuous one,
Alike, be it statehood or men,
The duty that's nearest, if faithfully done,
Brings its lustre, by plough or by pen.

Chickahominy River, Va.

Such unpronounceable name,
To me at first did seem,
Through swamps and woods I came,
To that Virginia stream.

Fain would I join the ranks
Of the bathers there I spy,
Tho' but April on the banks
Of the Chickahominy.

Lightsome are youthful days,
When care we scarcely know;
Impulsive in our ways,
As whistling on we go.

Boys, the present is yours,
No joy of earth will last,
Decline, when sin allures,
To ne'er regret the past.

Lowmoor, Va., and Hospitality

To desert-worn traveller, the palm
Is a welcome shelter, I'm sure;
As restful, refreshing, and calm,
Was the time I spent at Lowmoor.

Tho' travelled from palace to hut,
(No more need I see under heaven)
That welcome will ne'er be forgot,
Or spirit in which it was given.

From city's confusion and call
To peaceful Virginia farm,
Such quiet, in time might pall,
But a little hath much that can charm.

Aberdeen, Scotland

Granite city by the sea,
Bonnie Aberdeen,
Lovingly I think of thee,
In thy silvery sheen;
Gordon's gay, thy very own,
Khartum Gordon, noble son,
Many men have glory won
That have gone from thee.

Sturdy build we must admire,
Bonnie Aberdeen,
Byron's young poetic fire
Glowed by college green,*
Aul' Balgownie's blackened wa'
Ne'er he'd cross on foal at a',
For Rymin' Tammas said 'twad fa'
By bonnie Aiberdeen.

* Byron's early training was at Grammar school, Aberdeen.

People

Her Greatest Pride

(Sergeant York's Mother at the Capitol, Nashville, Tennessee)

What though the garb be rough—
That's not the soul;
Homespun, or gingham stuff—
Life may be whole.

Tennessee's bravest son,
Noble of soul,
Record of glory won
For honor's roll.

Stalwart, by mother's side,
Hear what she saith,
When asked, her greatest pride,
“He kept the faith.”

Grand Humility

(Sergeant York Declines to Be Lionized)

Tell me what is earthly glory,
Viewed in light of truest worth?
Can it lustre human story,
Change the circumstance of birth,
Add to character of mortal,
Smooth the path in life's rough way,
Ope to man celestial portal
At the close of his brief day?

Truly great is he who views it
In the beam of heavenly light;
Measures life, and thus reviews it
While his record speaks his might.

Negro "Spiritual"**

Favour of heavenly grace,
Rich gift of song,
Sent to the colored race
To cheer along.

Tense, to Aunt Lily's lay
I lend my ear,
While shade of bygone day
Seems ling'ring near.

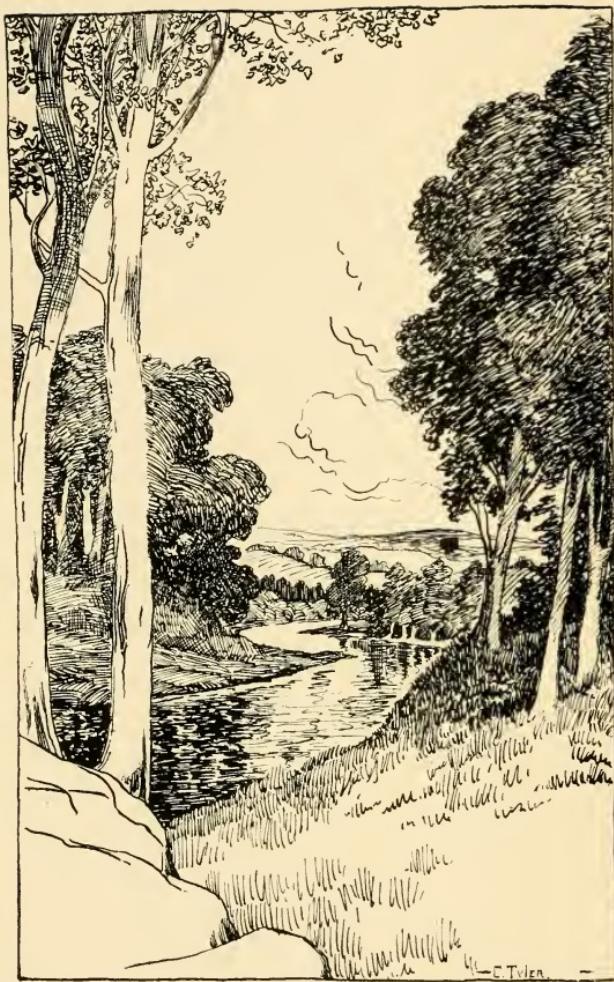
Swaying so waveringly,
Timed by her beat,
Cadence so quaveringly,
Hauntingly sweet.

Hinting of happiness
We may have missed,
That is in store for us
When fully bless'd.

Speakers

There's some would speak
Can scarcely think;
Ask some to speak, they'll cower;
When others speak
You grudge to wink,
Although they speak an hour.

* Lines prompted by hearing Aunt Lily Wiggins sing a negro "spiritual" in response to my request, at So. Laurel, School, Va.



A Bend in the Upper Fox River Valley, Illinois

Melba in Song

Much can man's invention do
To imitate your tone, 'tis true;
Yet favored they who list to you
In tones well-nigh sublime.

Slow to bend was Scottish sire,
Who sought to quench divinest fire;
To vision true, despite his ire,
You reached your goal in time.

Your tones remind of better sphere—
A seraph's tone o'erlapped, we hear;
That seems to come divinely near
In pearly tones of thine.

A Pen Portrait of a Stage Queen

And so she dominates the stage
So no one else is seen,
Without respect to sex or age,
Or worth of truest sheen.
A stately figure, classic face,
Commanding as a queen,
Her impress felt on human race
Until she's has-a-been.

Madame de Staël

Woman of trenchant, resourceful mind,
Futile our search for your like to find
 For speech of lightning flare;
Hearers were swayed, as by storms the trees
Or ripening grain in the autumn breeze,
 By powers of thine so rare.
Mortal, like others a child of man,
Proving the need of redemption's plan
 And in thy heart received;
Thy latest days were calm and fair,
As losing heart for worldly glare,
 Thy Saviour's word believed. (Matt. 11: 28.)

Francis (Lord) Bacon

A star arose from Albion's land,
Whose rays reached to many a shore;
The gift to express at his command
 Have few excelled before.
His mind was a jewel so rare,
In a casket frail and weak;
But his thoughts and speech so fair
 That, though dead, we hear him speak.
How few in our sin-stained race,
Like Bacon, obey the call
To give his best, when in disgrace,
 Inspiring those who fall!

Samuel's Call

Lesson of potent truth,
Given through infant page,
Samuel, not yet a youth,
Eli in hoary age.

Samuel, the pliant child,
Eli ignored, through sin;
Both sons, abandoned wild,
Vessels unfit within.

Mighty the truth we see,
God's order working still;
Willing and fit must be;
He uses whom he will.

Frances Ridley Havergal

"How beautiful to be with God,"
Comes wafted o'er the main;
A word from saint on earth who trod,
Nor trod her path in vain.
Her sight the brighter vision caught,
Though yet the veil between,
Her life with fruitful labor fraught
Ere it was fuller seen.

George Noel Gordon (Lord Byron)

Byron, so great, yet mortal,
In thought, like seraph's flight,
Dame Poesy ope'd her portal
When you bore into sight.

You came not empty-handed
To scale her toilsome height,
But girt, and golden-banded
In your poetic might.

Had you, of nature's favor,
Your course, let wisdom steer
How different hist'ry's savor,
How rich your guerdon here!

Your handsome face and figure,
Target for Satan's wile,
If snapped by tempter's trigger,
In dark Egyptian guile,*

From fate would brook no warning,
Fine-sensed, yet slave of time,
The lowly things, but scorning,
Yet soared to heights sublime.

So early passed through Jordan,
Thou son of reckless sire,
Through bond with Scottish Gordon,†
Thus heard your poets' lyre.

Would those, so nature-gifted,
Seek earthly honour less,
Sooner their dross be sifted,
Greater to bless the race.

* Potiphar's wife.

† His mother was from Aberdeenshire

Crocodile Tears, or Marie Bashkirtseff*

Poor Marie Bashkirtseff, poor Marie,
Plaintively said, as they cried;
Since she could, why didn't she marry,
Maybe she wouldn't have died.
Genius through brush, and by letter,
Destined for glory and fame;
"Yes," sobbed the other, "far better,
Than tombstone to show such a name."

Eve's Daughter

Did you ever know child of Eve,
Whose mind acted like a sieve
Whatever she knew,
Nor question if true,
Let it through or she never could live?

Such a chatterbox gab was she,
That whene'er she met two or three,
Be it joy or sorrow,
She could talk till tomorrow,
Till you'd wish she were up a tree.

* Overheard, as two debutantes were discussing the untimely death of the young Russian diarist and painter.

Collafemina, the Young Italian Singer

(At an Elgin Vesper Service)

Youth from favored land of song,
To you may heaven its gift prolong,
 To bless your fellow-men,
Music lovers there that day
Will ne'er forget your opening lay,
So spell-enrapt as one, were they
 With "Caro mio ben."

Limpid tones, like bird from heaven,
Your gift divine, but God hath given
Perhaps a child of seven times seven,
 Sing such a "Caro ben."

Long to mem'ry's walls will cling,
And thought recurrent joy will bring,
 As we did hear you then;
So, lighter tread our onward way,
Nor here would always wish to stay,
But hear first-hand your borrowed lay
Of * "Caro mio ben."

Lovely Woman

O woman, lovely woman!
("Twixt devil and the deep sea.")
He's less than man, thwarts nature's plan
That will exist without thee.

* My well-beloved.

Scottish Brains

Where have the Scottish got their brains?
Is it through toil, heartaches, and pains
 When numbered with the great?
A large per cent doth Britain draw
For letters, war, finance, and law,
 And lead in things of state.
Where'er doth fate incline your lot
You're apt to find the canny Scot
 Nor rests till he's abroad,
In maitters sma' as weel as great,
Ye'll fin' he's nae sae unco blate,
 On life's weel traivelt road;
An' if his chance he hasna' taen
Afore his sun gaes down at e'en,
 His refaage is in God.

True Blue

Are the Shylocks dead, as I hear some say,
That are after the pound of flesh,
Who would use the other one's mill, the day
 That they have their oats to thresh?
But the one who ne'er sits on another's coat tails
 Is the one I most admire,
But can give and take, has a true handshake,
For their works'll pass through the fire. (1 Cor. 3:
 13.)

Virginia's Clarion, Patrick Henry

Give liberty or death—of Heaven-born fire,
What more might man express to be immortal?
A spark divine aflame sets man's desire,
While listening angels wait by heav'nly portal.

Liberty or death! We hear the echo still,
Distinctly sonorous, down halls of time,
While slumb'ring nations rise in common will
To swell the harmony in golden chime.

Immortals, or, They Gave Their Best

Why should I live for gathered store,
When I am rich in treasured thought?
For all who worthy knowledge sought,
Ere they were classed immortal,
Have laid their best at Wisdom's feet,
So all might share, which seems but meet;
Each left their mite of human lore
To bless their fellow mortal.

The City Teacher, or, No Jografy

Ma says "I don't need jografy
To marry like herself;
Nor pa; who's in photography
And says, "You're on the shelf."
Nor Auntie Kate, who's married, too,
And likely so will I,
To study books just spoils my looks—
I'll soon bid school good-bye.

The Forty Thieves, or, a Landmark

From Ali Baba's forty thieves
Good Lord deliver us;
When one or two a record cleaves
In such unholy fuss,
If all the others took a peck
And left you but your bones,
When Job-like friends, come see the wreck
They'd pile it high with stones.

Nary a Talent

“ His talent is hid in a napkin,”
The father indulgent says;
“ We'll see him come home with his sheepskin,
When through with his college days.”

“ Dear dad, I can't live on a pittance,
For nothing's cheap here, I find,
Send kindly another remittance,
For sure, I'm improving my mind.”

'Tis a letter addressed, “ Mr. Warner,”
And signed by an LL. D.,
For years I have shaken each corner,
But talent I never could see.

A Fast Age

Patriarch* at fifty-six
Surely, life is rapid now;
Soon you'll cross the river Styx,
Think ye, chaplet for your brow?

Look at Abraham of old,
Father of the faithful race;
At your age had he been told
He was chosen for the place?

Age of speed we're living in,
All who think, agree 'tis tense;
Does it mitigate the sin
Of the world's worst offense?

He Sleeps in France

Called to unite in a legion band,
To help so right should win,
Finished your course in a foreign land
Far from your kith and kin,
Peaceful thy sleep in the land of France,
Proudly she gives you room,
Nor is there lacking the tender glance
Where you lie, when they deck with bloom.

* A grandsire eleven times.

Gardens



Burns' Cairn

1. Man's inhumanity to man, etc. (the marble heart).
2. For pleasures are like poppies spread, etc.
3. A man's a man for a' that.

Burns' Cairn

(In My Garden)

Three of Burns' Best Quotations Engraven in Stone, and Psa. 103: 15

Here see thy facile pen
Dipped in sublimest thought,
Basely expressed by men
In conduct worse than nought.

Then, as we higher rise,
Flesh-like the marble wrought
These words (thy greatest prize),
Millions as fools have sought.

Then we ascending find
Tribute to worthy man,
Whom anywhere we find
If we but closely scan.

Genius has had his say.
What saith the Holy Writ?
Grasslike is man's today;
Last word: sublimely fit.

An Elgin Garden in May

(Watch Street)

Oh! what can heaven be? when garden fair
Can with such varied hues enchant the eye,
While redolence upon the morning air
Insists that nature's child go lingering by.

Such floriculture is noble art,
When passer-by can enjoy a share;
It helps to lighten full many a heart
By joy increased, with no added care.

Elgin Thrift Gardens

While many boast, and heave a toast
On what they hold as rare,
The Elgin crowd may well be proud
Of gardens that are there.

There Elgin's name has added fame
Through those who faithful toil,
Both man and maid, with hoe and spade,
Who till responding soil.

And one may tire, as well's perspire
When turning o'er the sod.

The Talmud reads, "Who plants the seeds
And tills, doth worship God."

Reflections on My Trip Abroad*

A score of years, or more, I hoped and dreamed
That Albion's shores I'd visit once again;
Green Erin's isle, and Gallic † land, it seemed,
I should include—my roaming heart would fain.

Where nature's beauteous forms in vale and hill
Were seldom marred, a feast to eager mind,
Nay, rather beautified, by artists' skill
With plant and shrub and tree of varied kind.

On walks Elysian oft I wandered far,
Each step revealing combinations new;
Moss, fern to oak, sundew to deodar,
Just paradise, more fair, could come to view.

Then must I step from this to common things?
Ah, yes! For duty's call must be obeyed,
Or mem'ry's treasured vision may take wings,
So I will labor on, and feel repaid.

* In 1903.

† France.

An Elgin Garden in Summer

(Mrs. R——'s)

There's garden sweet, on Elm Street
That should not be forgot;
It e'en looks cool by lily pool
When noon tide sun is hot;

While lilies rare the beauties share
With fish of golden sheen,
Who actively, attractively
Flit in and out between.

The perfumed air, from roses rare,
And all so worth their room,
Whose colors vie, with sunset sky
And yucca's stately bloom.

From ferns and rocks to hollyhocks
And blooms like maidens' blush,
And grasses strange, that surely range
Through pampa, reeds and rush.

Then at a turn a shapely urn
Adds beauty to the scene,
But may you share with those been there
Such garden seldom seen.

The gard'ner there has done her share
To clench her just renown,
Such colors vie to glorify
Our dear old Elgin town.

Perhaps you'd rue, ere I got through,
To mention all that's there,
Come, see by eye, then classify
With Queen of Sheba fair.*

* 1 Kings 10: 7.

A June Morning in an Elgin Garden*

A morn in June sets all a-tune
In this Fox River Valley,
The pleasant air and all so fair
Insist that forth we sally.

The garden flowers and fresh'ning showers,
And Sol's alluring rays,
The color scheme, as rainbow beam
All speak our Maker's praise.

The Alpine things, as rock cress, clings
To boulders that are there,
While altitudes show nature's moods
As Pisgah's mount might share.

The scarlet glare, as burning flare
Of Orient poppies flame,
The columbine our thoughts a-twine
With colors rarely tame.

Love-in-a-mist doth still insist
Syringa does as well,
To look their best, among the rest
With Canterbury bell.

The tall foxglove we truly love
With spotted bell-hung spire;
The ferny grot, a restful spot,
Seems all we could desire.

The william, sweet, gives pleasant greet
With ring in every eye,
While iris-bloom may well assume
To rainbow shades outvie.

* A rhythmic narrative on my garden.

Then southernwood, that smells so good,
And plant named heav'ly blue,
While silver sage gives hint of age,
But that's its foliage hue.

The lily cup with petals up
And lemon's scalloped bell,
Then pansy race, and impish face
Says Johnny-jump could tell.

Slim-stemmed and neat, the marguerite,
With petals snowy-white,
And golden heart, with Cupid's dart,
Grace many a wedding rite.

Rose, queen of flowers, from dwarf to bow'rs,
None can with her compare;
Nor tongue can tell the sensuous spell
Whose fragrance fills the air.

The shrub and shade of sylvan glade,
Wistaria hung from trees,
Per'winkle dell, and mints that smell,
And nicked rosemary leaves.

Where lemon balm scents air so calm,
And tones so sweetly ring
In limpid notes, from feathered throats—
In joy their praises sing.

A home 'mid this doth hint of bliss
That comes from paradise;
A youth lived here, 'mid scenes so dear,
Would fain to live it twice.

My pen could run from sun to sun
In praise of plants in June;
But let us share the garden fair
When keyed to autumn's tune.

With blithesome ways and youthful days
Such plants to mem'ry cling;
A spot like this suggests a bliss
That heaven alone can bring.

O God!—so great, who knew man's state,
First placed him in a garden,
But there he fell by Satan's spell
And all since then need pardon.

We know we can pursue thy plan—
With thee our Eden share;
As then thou sought to share their thought,
Who did thine image bear.

One of Many Elgin Gardens

What wondrous glow can nature show
When man her fancies guide!
Our mental state with powers so great
Reflexed in gardens' pride.

A rest to mind, from daily grind
And stir of life's confusion;
A garden neat, 'mid odors sweet,
And bloom in fine profusion.

From foreign strands and distant lands,
Say they who have been there,
"To mem'ry clings the beauteous things
They've seen in gardens rare."

Who cannot roam; some nearer home
Invite your close attention:
Their color scheme, like artists' dream,
Is worthy special mention.

It seems each sense through purpose tense
In garden pleasures find;
Who would deny, with those that try
To solace human mind.

Miscellaneous

Nothing But Work

No time for other things!
Avaunt the thought
As if a traitor knave were lurking near,
If faithful sought,
Rare fruit it brings
To balance life aright while toiling here.

A Flexible Mind, or Bear and Forbear

Have you ever met those, my friend,
Whose minds run in such a trend,
Be they stout or thin,
They're as mean as sin,
And sooner would break than bend?

A favor kind heaven can give,
To mortals on earth who live,
A flexible mind,
Which I'm sure you'll find
Makes it easier to forgive.

And who, but doth sometimes sin?
For Satan hath set his gin,
To becloud the life,
Or stir up strife,
Or dishearten one's self within.

So on faith we must depend,
And through grace we will amend,
If we stand by each other
As friend and brother
We're sure to win out in the end.

George, Did You Break the Pitcher?

"O George, dear, what is the matter?"
Came sweetly on the air,
When she heard an awful clatter,
As he slipped on the cellar stair.
"Oh! say, is the pitcher broken?"
Rang her voice, so clear and shrill;
He gruffly answered, "No, it's not,
But, by hang! it surely will." Smash.

Crocks and Firkins

Tell me, what's a family jar?
Nought in Webster can I find,
Some one says it hints of war
Of a most peculiar kind.

Never khaki have I worn,
Tho' I'm not a feeble-mind;
One said, "You'll be sadly torn
If the proof you're bent to find."

Bachelor and all alone,
Subject hard as mason's wall,
Firkins, crocks, and demijohn
Dark as night, I've seen them all.

The Viper Tongue (So-Called)

Is there a use for the viper tongue,
Is it when venom of man is flung,
Or truth is plainly told?
Truth that cuts like lance of steel
And makes the guilty subject feel
Whether they're young or old.

A Japanese Arch in Author's Garden



A Corner in Heaven

It may be but gossip, but if it is true,
It's surely worth telling again;
If some never heard it, to them it is new,
So I'll use it as subject for pen.

In a dream one was carried to city of light,
Where the streets were of glittering sheen;
And a messenger hastened to show him the sight—
Of such beauties no mortal had seen.

Neither beauty, nor radiance that beamed from each face
Could be pictured by brush or by pen;
What's in store for the ransom'd of sin-blighted race
Is at present beyond human ken.

All-pervading expansiveness savor'd the place
That in language could never be told;
Save a self-centered corner of limited space,
Like enclosure, encircled with gold.

"They think they're the only ones here," he did say,
Speaking low as we tiptoed them by;
Such thought will dispel, and the fence melt away,
As the clouds that will flee from the sky.

While they lived on the earth, some were greedy for pelf,
Albeit 'twas tarnished with sin;
But as none come to stay here but haters of self,
They must part with it ere they come in.

There were all kinds of worshipers wafted from hence,
I'll not group them by number or name;
I believed what he said, that "the ones in the fence
Were from church with a such and such name."

Cup of Contentment

Contentment is a worthy state
For any mortal's mind;
Begin in youth, ere 'tis too late,
This noble trait to bind;
"For birds far off have feathers fair,
And distant hills are green,"
But they who drain this chalice rare
Have sweeter rest at e'en.

Aberdeen Students' Motto

(Plain Livin' an' High Thinkin')

No need to wonder,
Though well we may ponder
The time-worn practise of Aberdeen men;
Who'd struggle through college,
As thirsting for knowledge,
They had to live simple to qualify, then.

An Appetizer

Mush and milk in the morning
'Taties and beans at noon,
Such fare, who would think of scorning,
Should live six months on the moon.*
And now, with aerial flying,
Such tricks may be done quite soon,
They may start her off by the primrose light †
And get landed safe by noon.

* Scientists tell us the moon is an ash heap.

† Earliest dawn.

The Wedding Presents, or, Who Is Boss?

Since writing of the broken pitcher I have been told the true story of that incident by one who plucked June roses with Marjory many years ago. It was not cider, but wine, that George went for, and the pitcher was a choice wedding present from a relative of Marjory's; hence my revision, desiring to present the actual facts.

The honeymoon had quickly passed,
As married folks they now were classed,
 Nor cause for envy there.
The newlyweds sat down to dine,
“O George, let’s have some sherry wine—
A wedding present superfine—
 So old, they said, and rare.”
“I surely will, my Marjory dear,”
As reaching round for pitcher near
 He made for cellar stair.
He just had gone, when such a clatter—
“O Georgie dear, what is the matter?”
 Serenely floats on air.
“I hope the pitcher isn’t broken,”
Tho’ no response has Georgie spoken,
 But fumes of sulphurous air.
“By all that comes from holy smoke
“I hope the pitcher isn’t broken,”
“Why, Georgie, not a word you’ve spoke
 Since sounds came up from there.”
“Oh! what will Cousin Polly do?
She’d turn discolored, black and blue
If this catastrophe she knew,
 Her cries would rend the air.
A trick like that no child would do,
Of glass Bohemia; strictly new,
 I feel like tearing hair,
This is prodigious, something tense,
Nor can I move a step t’ward whence
 The sounds proceeded, there.”

A step or two she quav'ring took,
All color from her face forsook,
 The picture of despair.
She stood transfixed, with stony stare
As sounds like groans came up from where
 Her husband went from hence.
Then down a step or two she went,
The truth to find, on kind intent,
 But image of suspense.
But George his latitude did find,
As well as caught his second wind,
Tho' blinking hard to clear his mind
 While groping for the stair.
No word till now, her hubby spoke,
Now gruffly said, "It isn't broke,
But, hang it—with a single stroke
 I know it surely will."
The next she heard, a grinding smash—
She lost her balance, fell "kersmash."
Her husband never winked a lash,
But sprinted past her like a flash
 And made for clearer air.
Poor Marjory soon came crawling up,
Then gently muttered, "Please, a cup
 Of Seltzer, can you spare?"
Her pride was crushed; nor haughty mien
Her conduct show'd—where once had been,
 But meekly sought a chair.
When seated, came her color back,
Although for words she had some lack:
 Did deftly pat her hair.
"Now George," said she, "I was so tense,
No answer, wrought such dread suspense
 While you were silent there.
What earthly good are wedding things—
So little joy or comfort brings,

They're nothing but a snare.
To see you still alive and well,
Although so recently you fell,
 My joy's beyond compare."
And now, when they sit down to dine,
No one or other hints of wine—
 A most congenial pair!
So, newlyweds, just take a hint—
Oft wedding presents spoil content;
Your journey start with one intent,
Nor deviate the slightest jot,
(Or carking misery be your lot
If this terse maxim be forgot)
 No outside counsel share.

Bird of the Rainbow Wing

(More Flighty Than Sensible)

O bird of gorgeous feather,
 O bird of rainbow wing,
Came you through stress of weather,
 Or so we'd hear you sing?

Imagination is my wing;
 I trill it all the day,
Judgment says I shouldn't sing,
 So I will steer away.

Then trim imagination,
 For steering needs from wing,*
To balance your creation.
 Then glad we'll hear you sing.

* Take feathers from wing to stick in tail.

Optimism

Under a cloud, but it's just for a time,
Sunshine is coming tomorrow,
Trouble enough has each day for itself,
Think not that you'll have to borrow.

Home-Longing

Hankering for home comes in—
Won't be denied,
Nor free from taint of sin,
Toss'd on life's tide.
Footsteps are homeward bound,
Hears he his heart rebound,
Fearful lest sight or sound
Disturb them there.

Then creeps he stealthy there
Lest some perceive,
While rises evening prayer,
Mild summer's eve.
Grace for them all is sought,
Life's daily battle fought,
Ill purpose comes to nought
Mete each his share.

Later in evening's calm
He shows his face;
Welcome is healing balm—
Finds he his place.
Stronger to live his day,
Grace now resumes its sway,
On then towards the day
All gather there.

The One-Track Mind

There is a state we cannot doubt
Exists in humankind;
If sensible, we'll try and rout—
It is the one-track mind.

And should their mental vision fix
On things in stony stare,
Try waving arms, or any tricks
To break this hellish snare.

Prosperity

Prosperity! What means that potent word,
Whose magic spell so impresses man?
Is it more powerful than any sword?
To miss its call, is there earthly ban?
So would it seem by the leaden look
That greets us if we're in hodden gray,
Not thus we're taught from the only Book
That leads unerring to perfect day.

Freedom

Freedom! oh, glorious word,
For thee we'll do or dare,
Fused into one accord,
The fruits of life to share.

For thee our sires have fought,
Valiant they led the van,
Let this impelling thought
Pulsate in every man.

Perfidy

Wronged by a bosom friend,
Sorrow for me;
Nor can I comprehend
Such perfidy.

Confidence ne'er betrayed,
Though follow light or shade,
When once my word has said
Silent I'll be.

Nor would my nature own
Conduct of scowl and frown.
Solace from heav'n alone
Can comfort me.

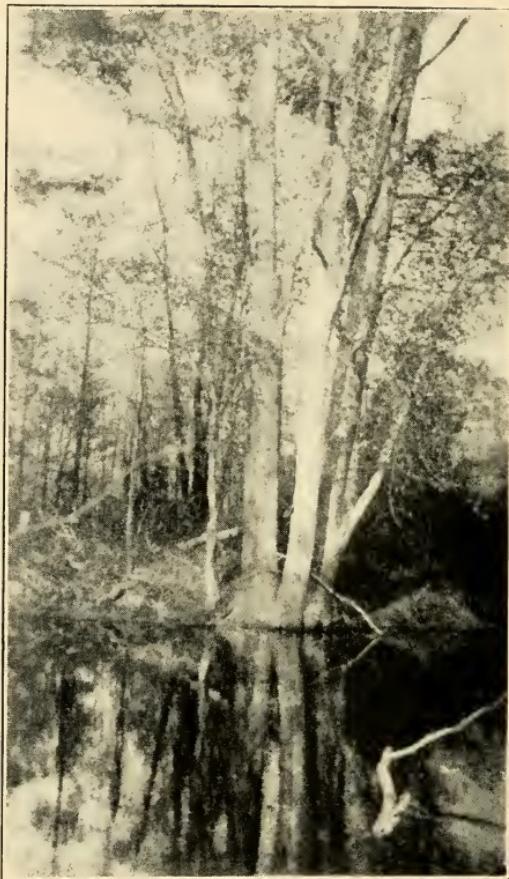
The Bunnies

A rabbit was tending her young ones alone—
Quite intent on their welfare was she;
And while grazing she passes a bouldersome stone—
To her horror and hers did they see

Two bloodthirsty beagles careening their way,
Their eyes fixed on her and her young;
But so kindly had Providence hinted his nay
To a hole she and bunnies had sprung.

The beagles did fret till they foamed at the mouth,
Their intentions gaed unco a-gley,*
And the rabbit and young ones are able to sprint,
And their numbers are still on the way.

* Badly squinted.



On the Banks of the Chickahominy, Virginia

Fashion's Slaves

Fain would Dame Fashion have savages
Surge on our streets today;
Purses feel heavy the ravages—
Less the clothes, more there's to pay.

The Tray of Gold

Hear, friend, stop, look, and listen,
Think if you're right with God,
What tho' the gold will glisten
Luring you on life's road.

Bones of so many are bleaching
Out on the desert way
Further and further a-reaching,
Lured by the golden tray.

Glory and life immortal,
Beckon the other way,
Open the pearly portal
Leading to fadeless day.

What if I hear your message—
Must I it all forego?
What will its import presage
While I am here below?

Rightly do what lies nearest—
“Duty ne'er calls two ways,”
Life, then, to you and those dearest,
Radiant with heaven-sent rays.

The Stormy Petrel

A bird came to me in my home one day,
Looking weather-worn, weak, and distressed;
As my heart sympathetic felt kind, I dare say,
So I welcomed the bird to my breast.
So trustful and sure that my motives were right,
That I ne'er tho't of searching my mind,
But since cause for reflection has clarified sight,
I'm convinced 'twas of vulturous kind.

How Favoured, Man

How favoured, man, in land like this,
Where smile divine is given,
So much enticing man to bliss,
Both here, and then in heaven.
The married folks are pride of race
When they show duplication;
For did they not, a lonesome place,
This part of God's creation.
When Sabbath services have come,
Try reg'lar to attend them,
And to the children say, "Now come,"
Nor be content to send them.

My Wish

Though some faithless, I be constant;
Heart that feels; to honour true;
Eyes to see: to love respondent—
Miss me when with life I'm through.

My Lilts

Booklet of simple lay
Savors of roundelay,
Child of my autumn day,
 My very own.

Should it be darksome horse,
No time for dank remorse,
I've nearly run my course—
 All one to me.

The Bell Call

The dinner bell, we love so well,
 With tone so rich and clear,
Whene'er 'twas rung its metal tongue
 Commanded, "Home you steer."

Sometimes we'd roam so far from home,
 We'd fail to hear its lay;
And then we'd quake, and voices shake
 While thinking what to say.

"Rung ear"^{*} or late," its voice did state,
 "Come, feet, incline this way,
To mem'ry cling, your winsome ring
 From childhood's early day."

Elgin Versus Chicago

Up an' awa wi' an airy train,
 Nane o' 's left for we'll a' go,
Gled wull a be tae get back again,
 For ae day is aneuch in Chicago.

* Scotch for "early."

Father Time

(Elgin's Patron)

Time's unrelenting scythe
Makes pleasure's victims writhe—
 Some curse and swear.
Each day his meas'ring rod
Counts what each mortal trod
 On earth so fair.
His tireless, beating wings
Their potent message brings,
Hold loosely transient things
 Sits Justice there.

Four of a Kind, or, "What's in a Name?"

They had sat down to eat one day
 When loud was rung the bell,
I'll answer it myself, did say,
 "Yes, sir, I am George Bell.*
"No, sir, not the photographer,
 An east side man, they tell;
If you're a good geographer
 You'll hunt another Bell.
"You've been to three! and now to me!
 Well, sir, then go to—well—"br/>Oh! what a bother, since when my mother
 Said, "Yes, he's Georgie Bell."

* Elgin had four of that name.

Is Silence Always Gold?

Is silence always just, and right?
Doth wisdom always truth withhold?
So oft we hear, as silver bright
Is speech, and silence purest gold.

The Backbone of the Nation

(The Family Life)

Oh! blithe and happy days, when love was young,
And richer still when thrilled with childish glee,
The noisy hum when dinner bell was rung,
As 'leven sat down to sup their barley bree.*

Oft pay-nights came with sense of anxious care,
And brows were knit that ways and means be found,
From shoes to sheets, that all might have their share,
Besides, the monthly payments came around.

A lonely meal at noon, where silence reigns,
(A mockery if dinner bell were rung.)
The voice of thanks a tearful note contains,
The chorus scant when evening hymn is sung.

And thus the life of working man goes by—
A life of rich fulfilment in his place,
With lights and shadows in his family sky,
And still intent for weal of human race.

* Scotch; barley broth, or soup.

Marriage

Aye! marriage is a favored state,
With God's especial sanction,
When man has found congenial mate
And both share heavenly unction.

Longevity

You've passed the cent'ry mark, I hear,
And four besides this week and year—
That truly is some age;
Now, patriarch of negro blood,
Your folks are oft misunderstood,
As read from current page.
'Tis truth that prompts enquiring mind
The secret of your age to find,
If kindly you'll admit.
“Ah wo'ks a little, then Ah rest,
An' then Ah sets an' thinks, the best,
An' sometimes jes', Ah set.”

Aim to Be Pleasant

Smile, though your head be aching,
To brighten another's life;
Smile, though your heart is breaking
Under life's stress and strife.
Fear not you are deceiving,
Tho' that's what some may say,
Giving, you are receiving,
To strengthen you on your way.

My Toast

They toast of this and toast of that,
And some who toast, speak through their hat—
Not college-bred nor 'cademy.
They rarely ask a toast from me,
But should they deign to ask, some day,
Perhaps I'll rise and modest say,
“From soil enriched my tree has sprung—
Behold, how rich with fruit 'tis hung!”

Or

“From Scottish soil my tree has sprung,
But fruit in U. S. A. is hung;
So, those who look can plainly see
Some look like mother, some like me.”

Wasted Pity, or Dear Little Kitty

Wondrous the workings of nature,
Seen as in weak self defense,
Lately a fur-bearing creature
Stealthily moved by the fence.

Keen for extension of knowledge,
Sightly its form and fur,
Ne'er was I taught it in college,
But, nearing it, spoke with a purr.

“Let me, now, dear little kitty,
Stroke you so kindly, my pet,”
Sure it was longing for pity,
Swift was I struck with a jet.

Saintly Jerusalem city,
Language would fail me to tell,
(I was the object of pity),
Ne'er had I dreamed of such smell!

Fate's Guest

We hear of three ladies of state,
Who sprung from an old family tree,
Miss Fortune, Miss Chance, and Miss Fate,
And the first is as fickle's could be.

I own I had doubts of the next,
Her conduct seemed lighter than air,
To me her complexion seem'd fixed,*
And an uncertain look to her hair.

I somehow was taken with Fate,
She smiled, saying, "Please dine with me,"
I halted, said, "Isn't it late
To sit down with your company?"

I stuttered, and stammered my lack
Of polish, for her high degree;
"If all you've got's on your back
It counts little or nothing with me."

A hand-painted card at each place,
(I came with a mind bent to please,
Some looked as though flushed from a race †),
And the flower by my card was heart's-ease.

Fate's table was bounteously spread—
"Ne'er barter her service for gold,"
Said a luminous motto I read,
And her favors were for young or old.

Of life's sparkling nectar-filled cup,
From Fate's kindly hand came my share,
She smiled, as she said I should sup,
Nor need I leave hasty from there.

* Her color didn't fluctuate.
† Chasing gold.

I barely could hinder my eyes
From watching her serve every guest,
Or hardly restrain my surprise
(For all came by special request.)

That she should so graciously deign
To notice poor mortal like me,
Since realm over which I did reign
Was of lowly and humble degree.

For many unkindly complain
That her company few would desire;
They'd be working through sunshine and rain,
Yet she'd grudgingly give them their hire.

And then I went musingly on,
And sat 'neath the old apple tree,
To think, with my race nearly run,
She should smile, and speak kindly to me.

I sweepingly looked at it all,
Till night's sable shadows came down,
And heard, so distinctly, the call,
"There's a cross here, but yonder a crown."

Oh! why find we fault with our lot,
Blame Fate for it all, and repine?
Let the things we can't change be forgot,
And in calmness our spirits resign.

The Grouch Class

There's a class that I think should be laid on the shelves,
They're so seldom at peace with their brothers;
I am sure they seem never at peace with themselves,
And they're far from a comfort to others.

What Is “New Beneath the Sun”?

I am here on Sabbath morning,
Not by city's noisy show,
But where creeks and woods adorning
Hint my Maker's handwork know;
Where my thought inclines to wander,
And the scenes and sounds display;
Much that gives me cause to ponder
When I near the close of day.

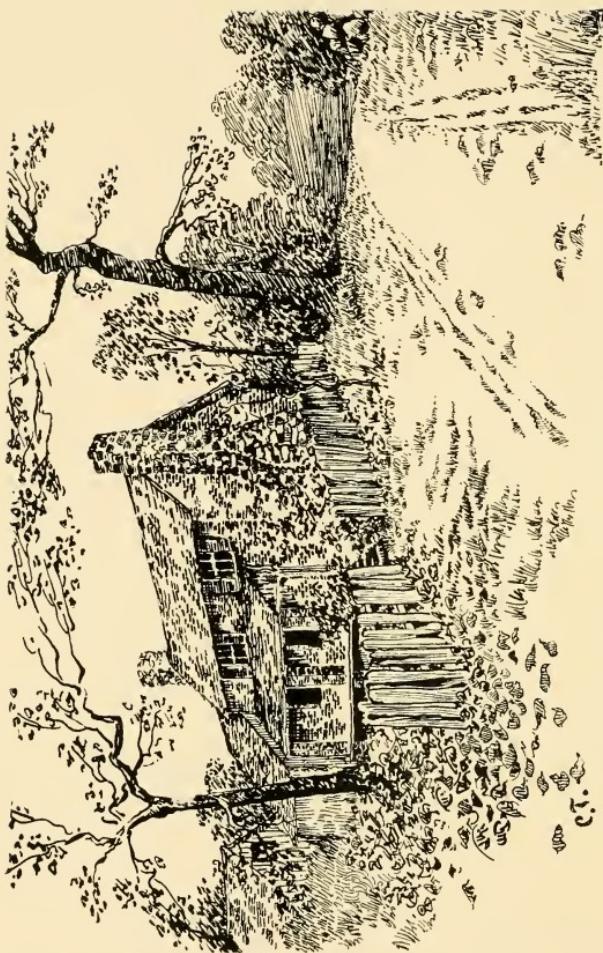
True, have we not great occasion
To contemplate and admire,
To what wonderful achievements
Man doth rightfully aspire?
Any one must be insensate
Who is blind to what he's done.
Was not all this here before him?
Then, what's “new beneath the sun”?

Life's Twilight

And now I'm looking on, have sung my little lay;
The night comes on apace, I near the close of day.
When sounds the trumpet call, with millions I'll arise;
When all receive their own, there will be some surprise.

Lest some reader who like myself expects to be there (have apprehension of drawing a blank,) I have added a consolation line to alternate at will, with the last.

To joy in trees so vernal; where are no cloudy skies.



An Old Home, James River Valley, Virginia

Gifts

God "giveth gifts to men,"
So saith the sacred word,
Some wield a truthful pen,
Mighty as any sword.

Elgin Scottish Picnic, or, Versatility

Blaw th' pipes an gar' thim skirl,
Mak' us think we're young again
In the Heilan schottishe whirl,
Loupin' like a lichtsum swane.

Noo a Scottish story taul',
Lomond's bonnie banks yi'll sing
Hooch, it's herty, bliss ma saul,
Gie's a shake o' Heilan' fling.

On the morrow in his place,
With his family—count them all—
At the common means of grace
Faithful to the Sabbath's call.

Consternation—what's amiss?
Preacher hasn't shown his face;
Will ye help us out of this?
Sure, the deacon fills his place.

Sing a song, or say a grace;
If it's wanted, play the flute;
Purpose strong to bless his race,
Soon he'll twang the golden lute.

A Scotchman's Grace

A strange experience once befell my lot,
Which incident occurred in lowly cot,
In cotter's home among the Scottish hills,
Remembrance of my hearty welcome thrills

My heart no longer young. It will be new
To those who look at life from different view.
A Presbyterian, staunch, of olden school,
Who had his own concept of golden rule

With no intent to hint him insincere,
A glance he gave to see if all were here;
With motion slow his hand spread o'er his face,
He cleared his throat, and then commenced the grace.

The stir subsides, a sigh escapes his lips;
A silence brief, then Jock says, "Jamie nips,"*
"Keep still, ye rascal," father gruffly says.
In measured tones he starts again, and prays

For daily grace to act discreet and wise.
Against my better thought I ope'd my eyes;
There, through his fingers, watches restive tots,
While special mention makes of Hottentots,

And speaks of strength to stand the Afric heat,
Which missionaries bear to make complete
Their sacrifice, to share the joyful sound
Of gospel message all the world around.

A tho't flits o'er my mind: can he this day
Get back in time around by Biscay Bay?
A snicker ill-restrained convulses me—
In what condition is my cup of tea

* Pinches me.

The hostess poured, ere he his screed began?
Oh! never did I hear of such a plan
Where food, once hot, and cannot know
How she, his wife endures, nor gets a show.

A yowl! my reverie is dashed to bits
As some one cries, "Come help, the cat's taen fits!"
All hands on deck; the host alone keeps calm;
I think I heard him say, "Omit the psalm."

At last, when all returned, was peace restored,
And justice done to what was on the board.
Alone, I thought, ere sleep my eyes had sealed,
"Quite near at home, a hopeful mission field,"

For never had I witnessed scene like this,
Nor thought the children had done much amiss.
'Tis wise a jumping-off place keep in mind,
When extra-lengthened prayer pleads second wind.

A Chicago Sunday

Weary of life's grim battle,
Blighting, the thought of sin,
Tired of the noise and rattle,
Sick of the city's din,
Soothe me with the impressions
That evening shades bring down
In the country, of God's impression,
For truly is man's, the town.

Will They Ever Be All Home Again?

Your thoughts go out in abysmal space,
As you sit by the hearth alone,
So well-defined each form and face
While you think where they all have gone.

At the call of fate you took up life's task,
Though destined you were to roam;
But now you have time, tonight, to ask,
Will they ever be all at home?

The Pattern in Life's Web

Ma coge* is dintit sair, a guess,
Th' ither hauf hae gaen amiss,
Or is 't th' boddom riv'n,
The cogie's sair't mi' rael weel,
Sae hae the pirn th' ca' th' speel,
An' fan th' patt'r'n's fully wiv'n.
Th'll take th' speerit Guid hae giv'n,
An' heist it aff tae hiv'n.

* A Scotch wooden dairy vessel. 2 Cor. 4: 7.

Spiritual

Resting in God

May I diverge not?—no, nor breathe a sigh
For days replete with joys that are no more.
Calmness on heaven-borne zephyrs draw so nigh,
I, now can wait Thy time to reach that shore.

In the Light of His Countenance

Thy favor, Lord, is so divinely sweet—
Without, a walking skeleton is life,
Where'er we go, and oft in those we meet,
Such lack of calmness—unrest is rife.

Learn and remember that precious truth—
“In calmness and quietness shall be your strength;”
Earth's gain the chief end of life, forsooth,
His power is limitless, who's gone the length.

Thy Will Be Done*

The knowledge, Lord, that thy blest will is done
Consoles, enables me my race to run;
'Tis not for me to know if long the way
Since Thou hast promised strength from day to day.

Thy word, you're “not left comfortless alone,”
This brief eclipse of darkness far outshone,
And passing through, thy gracious presence near,
Sustained me, both to know and feel no fear.

'Twould be inhuman, heartstrings not to feel
The pangs of parting, wrought by this ordeal;
But o'er life's bourne in happiness we'll greet,
Nor tho't of parting mar, when then we meet.

* Written 1911, on the first Sabbath after the death of my wife,
Jessie Strachan Brown.

Hope

Why should we waste any time in repining?
Life has its nectar for each valiant soul,
Naught but contempt for the one bent on whining,
Whose sight has astigma, and misses the goal.

Courage, my heart, then, for each has its sorrow;
Such is the sin-blight and burden of men;
Brighten each day with a hope for the morrow,
That strength for each duty will come to thee then.

Family Worship*

To one a look, go, bring the Book,
The children know the import of that phrase;
There is but one, beneath the sun,
Can last humanity his length of days.

Impatience curb, nor sound disturb,
No lengthy reading from its sacred page,
Its precious truth, imparts from youth,
True secret of a mellowed life in age.

Accord complete, let all repeat,
Perchance a single thought, or verse complete;
Now let us kneel; a calm we feel
Pervades, while prayer ascends from mercy seat.

Dear freedom's land! Such worthy stand
Doth well become the head of every home;
A favor'd spot, where sin can not
Find resting place, when it elects to come.

* Generally after evening meal.



Vista Looking Toward St. Margaret's Well in the Author's Garden

Noblesse Oblige

Obliged to be noble!
Transcendent thought—
 Can this be lived out by man?
If pow'r not our own
Comes in from above,
 Then truly and surely we can.

Then what are the fruits
Of a life lived thus?
 A calmness, a worth so fair,
A sense of the beauty
Of love divine,
 And a loss when it's not there.

Mid-Week Prayer Meeting

This is the hour of prayer;
 Here duty calls,
Come, heavenly favors share
 Within those walls.
Here we, with one accord,
 Worship our gracious Lord,
And through his precious Word
 His grace recalls.

Favored by heavenly grace,
 Who faithful seek
His reconcilèd face,
 Contrite and meek,
Through his begotten Son,
 Whose blood hath victory won,
Strength for us, once undone,
 Whom sin made weak.

“Let Him Deny Himself”

I am that better part
Thou well may'st choose,
Though in thy secret heart—
Thyself must lose.

“Here no abiding city,”
I hear my Saviour say.
Time's wasted in self-pity
While on life's way.

Resignation

Shall we repine when chastened sore?
'Tis God allows, ne'er question more.
Increasing glory yet shall show,
For patient suff'r'ing here below.

Let courage rise, in life's extreme,
The clouds dispel, the light still gleam,
Then falter not, to court defeat,
The day, well spent, brings rest complete.

My Choice in Life

My choice in life, you ask? Then let it be,
Not liveried servants grant my least request;
Nor horde of doubtful courtiers fawn on me;
But rather of my choice:—this my behest,
The conscious favor of God's gracious smile,
Acquire the art to gracefully grow old,
A blessing to my fellow-man the while,
(Than seven figures count my wealth in gold).

Immanuel Baptist Church, Elgin, Ill.

When restful Sabbath's worship calls,
Man's choicest offering bring;
Within Immanuel's simple walls
Hear praiseful echoes ring.
Baptismal and communion rite
And marriage vows been said,
While there with wav'ring tear-dim'd sight
Have viewed our silent dead.
Not transept grand, nor vaulted nave,
Nor sculptured font is there,
But they, atoning blood can save,
Who joy in answered prayer.

True Ministers Versus False

Keep in the shadow of the cross,
Thou messenger of truth;
His cause doth often suffer loss
By ministers?—forsooth.

As herald, no uncertain sound
Your words should e'er convey;
For sons of Baal have covered ground
That should be ours today.

No ship dare lose the beacon light,
To clear the danger rocks;
The gospel trump sound clear and bright,
As Luther, Calvin, Knox.

Precious the Dust*

Precious the dust that in peace here reposes,
Spirit unfolding to impulse divine,
Borne by the angels where unfading roses
Bloom on forever, for heaven now is thine.

Music celestial, in tones that are vibrant,
Harmonies blending from harps ne'er unstrung,
Symphonic chords rise in choral exultant
From voices untiring, and never unsung.

Dare we begrudge them such favor'd existence,
Or breathe a wish that we still had them here?
Nay, let us rather, through faith and persistence,
So run our course as to join those so dear.

* Reflections at the grave of Jessie Strachan Brown, mother of our nine children.

By Little Gordie's Grave*

Rist ma lammie 'naith th' sod,
Noo yir speerit's taen tae God;
Ye hid a glint o' airth sae dreer,
Sae we'd lo'e yi' weel, ma dear.
Ne'er had granny seen yir face;
Early hid sh' rin 'er race;
Daurna' wus' 'er back at a',
For we'll warstle thou it a'.
Fan sh' sichts yir bonnie face
Swiftly kith an' kin sh'll trace,
Glorif'ed ye twa wull rise
When yi' hear th' wurd, "Arise."
Nor a tear bi-dim an' e'e,
Aifter baith His face wull see.

* A five-year-old grandson, Gordon Fehrman.

Better Than Gold

I could not live for gold or gathered pelf;
My God has finer things in store for me;
Coworker with him, leads me out of self,
And better things than gold are promised me.

Go, pass from out my life, ye gathered things,
Dispel ye treasure trove, and garnered store,
My vision's mighty sweep a glory brings,
Whose rays are caught from yon celestial shore.

Great is thy purpose here, O God, for us,
If we would fully give ourselves to thee;
Would we but trustful yield, and not discuss
With ifs, and ands, and wherefores as to me.

Ready to Go, or, Time's Up

You ask me the secret, if secret it is,
That so little I value a world like this.
My child, if you live till the crowd calls you old,
One furtive glance back makes you think it is cold.

But, grandpa, why, everything's lovely in May,
And I heard some one speak of the world as gay.
Yes, truly, my darling, but then, don't you see,
The viewpoint is different with you and with me.

'Tis the crosses in life makes my vision so clear,
And the loss of the loved ones whose mem'ry is dear;
I know it's the loveliest yet, for I ween
That for one in my station, there's much I have seen.

The song says, " My heart's in the Highland," my dear,
So I've loved ones in Highland, and some on this sphere;
I am fighting myself, so my influence will show
That when time is called, up, I'll be ready to go.

An Opinion

Sae muckle stuff it canna a be guid,
Bit maybe I'll tak' time it a' tae read,
An' gin a' lauch, or tear, fae hert draws oot,
A'll think its wurth th' time it tuk, nae doot;
An' if a read it aince, an' sum again,
A'll think the chiel wus richt tae tak th' pen,
Wreet doun the thochts 'at courses throu his min'
An' think it a' is fairly; sum is fine.

If, to any reader a verse seems abstruse, the author will be pleased to elucidate if requested.

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